

City on Target to Alleviate Flooding

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BY PAT KROCHMAL - Des Plaines Times

A cast of local city, county and state officials vigorously applauded the groundbreaking of the long-awaited Levee 50, the first in a \$50 million series of flood relief projects from Des Plaines to the Wisconsin border that will work to help keep Des Plaines and much of the surrounding area drier.

"After six years of countless meetings, planning designs and redesigns, a final agreement was made, the Farmer/Prairie Creek Project is near completion and Levee 50 is now a reality," said Des Plaines Mayor Anthony Arredia.

"On behalf of the residents of Des Plaines, I want to thank everyone whose hard work and maximum effort have been responsible for what will be the biggest contribution to reducing our city's flood problems," he added.

The levee, which is expected to be completed by the summer of 2004, will consist of a gated closure structure, a pump station and related flood prevention work on Prairie Farmer's Creek - immediately upstream from the Union Pacific Railroad - a clay blanket along the river's side of the embankment, and a floodwall between the railroad and Dempster Avenue.

Also called the Rand Park Flood Control and Multi-Use Project, it is the first of six projects planned for the Des Plaines River. That is probably because floodwaters from the river cause about \$1,315,500 worth of damage annually to structures in Des Plaines, Park Ridge and unincorporated Maine Township, according to the Army Corps of Engineers.

The damages include \$884,300 average annual structure damage, \$298,500 average annual traffic damage, and \$132,700 average annual indirect flood damage.

As a state sponsor for the federal project, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Office of Water Resources will design and construct the levee as part of its financial obligation to the project. Des Plaines and Park Ridge are tabbed to serve as local sponsors for the project and will own, maintain and operate the flood control and trail system.

The project will be financed 65 percent by the federal government, with the rest paid by state and local governments.

The flood control project, which was planned to control flooding caused by a "100-year" storm, also aims to provide recreational opportunities on the river.

In addition to flood control, Levee 50 consists of three phases. One of the phases, the development and extension of the bike path, already has been completed with the extension of an existing 48-inch culvert under the Union Pacific Railroad. A clay blanket was constructed on the river's side of the embankment, then an outer headwall and a 48-inch tide flex gate was added at the end of the culvert extension, according to the Army Corps of Engineers.

After the current Phase Two construction of Levee 50, which is now under way, Phase Three will include work on the floodwalls, the development of a multi-use trail, a Dempster Street underpass, closure structures at Rand and Ballard roads, interior storage basins, a Golf Road interceptor sewer gate at Big Bend Lake, and other required environmental mitigation.

A 12-foot wide multi-use trail also has been proposed for the Des Plaines River side of the floodwall that will run from Campground Road just south of Dempster Street to Rand Road. A 12-foot wide by 10-foot high tunnel will be constructed beneath Dempster so neither pedestrians nor cyclists will have to cross the busy street.

Almost all the officials attending the groundbreaking ceremony have helped with work on the project, including State Sen. Dave Sullivan, R-33rd; State Rep. Rosemary Mulligan, R-65th; State Rep. Elaine Nekritz, D-57th; Ann Linjoco, representing **U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky**;

State Sen. Susan Garrett, D-29th; Mount Prospect Mayor Gerald Farley, Republican Committeeman Mark Thompson; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative Roy Deda; Superintendent of the Cook County Highway Department Wally Kos; and Illinois Department of Natural Resources chief of engineering studies Arlan Juhl.